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*The extensive Propagation of Abraham's
Religion represented.*

A
S E R M O N

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GENES. XVIII. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him : and they shall keep the way of the lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

THESE words naturally lead us to consider the *duty* and *reward* of propagating principles of religion and virtue as *exemplified* in the character of the Patriarch *Abraham* — We here view him as a *Father* of a numerous family, and a *Leader* of a flourishing colony ; and in that capacity instrumental to promote the moral purposes of God's providence—We may withal

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take notice of several remarkable circumstances in the course of his history, as we follow him from place to place in his several migrations, which appear to have been providentially ~~so~~ ordered, as means of communicating to different people the benefit of his instructions and example. Agreeably to this latter view of the subject I now propose, by footsteps in the remains of antiquities sacred and prophane, to trace out the *extensive propagation* of *Abraham's* religion: for from this historical fact admitted we can upon the most probable grounds account for the derivation of many religious notions and rites, the discovery of which Deists vainly attribute to another quarter; for they are principles, not of religion purely *natural*, not such, as *flesh and blood*, but *our Father which is in heaven hath revealed*: principles originally of *divine extraction*, and successively communicated to mankind by patriarchal tradition.

That there should be some extraordinary persons in several periods of time, raised up to preserve, or to restore, the true sense of religion, is very agreeable to the reason of things, and the ordinary course of God's providence. For this end *Abraham* was in an especial manner called out from his country, his kindred,

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dred, and father's house, into a land distant and unknown. The Apostle tells us that by *Faith Abraham being called obeyed*. Now, if by *Faith*, or trust in the divine goodness, be understood an habit of mind gradually acquired by repeated experiences, we may probably suppose that *before* his call he was eminent for his piety, walking before God, upright and perfect in the observance of traditionary patriarchal religion. It was his glory to have stood singular in his integrity, and undefiled amidst the general corruption of his nation and family: he was preserved as *the salt of the earth*, as a chosen instrument to perpetuate the worship of the true God: he was favoured with many communications of the divine will, and intercourses, as I may say, so familiar, that upon this very account he is called the *friend of God*. He was a *Prophet*, an interpreter of the divine will, and a *preacher of righteousness*; a *Prophet* in both capacities, endowed with the knowledge of future events, and qualified to *teach the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment*. God, who at *sundry times and in divers manners* had spoken to the preceding patriarchs, did vouchsafe to him more frequent and explicit revelations: That promise of the universal blessing to mankind,

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mankind, which, being wrapt up in general terms, seemed hitherto but imperfectly and indeterminately revealed, was more clearly and distinctly laid open to his view: to *him* it was given more particularly to know, that *all the nations of the earth should be blessed thro' him* — *he rejoiced to see the day of Christ; he saw it and was glad.* His Covenant was an *evangelical* Covenant; and his Faith a *Christian* Faith: and therefore the extensive propagation of *his* religion is a subject very worthy of our present enquiries.

Upon the whole God never left himself in the world without witness, or mankind destitute of the benefit of some *revelation*, either immediately, or mediately, communicated. This was the foundation of patriarchal Religion: and seems sufficiently implied in the notion of that *Faith for which the Patriarchs obtained a good report.* We here in particular consider *Abraham*, as the principal instrument in carrying on this gracious design of providence: by *commanding his children and household after him to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment*, he became in a very comprehensive sense the *father of the faithful*, a propagator of God's true religion in a degenerate world. We must consider him not merely as
a person

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a person of uncommon sagacity, or singular natural abilities; but as a person under the influence of *supernatural* direction and assistance: so that his instructions are to be esteemed not only as the dictates of a wise *philosopher*, but as the doctrines of a person *taught of God*, and such, as carry in them the authority of a *divine Revelation*.

I shall not here repeat what hath been already remarked concerning the patriarch's travels and their moral effects in the countries where he sojourned: I shall at present consider him first in his *domestick* relation, and I shall consider the words of my text in their full extent: now they will be found to imply much more than at first sight might be apprehended; they imply the point which I am about to prove, *viz.* the extensive propagation of *Abraham's* religion. *He shall command his children and his household after him*: his several children, which soon became mighty families: his numerous dependents, which in those times made no inconsiderable kingdom. All these shared the common advantages of his instruction in an affair of universal importance. The care of the good father and master extended as far as his authority; being not confined solely to the child of *promise*

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mise and his posterity, but communicated also to *Ismael*, and his six other sons by *Keturah*. He, who is represented so careful in making a temporal provision for the *temporal* welfare of these children; he, who 'gave gifts to the sons of his concubines, and sent them away from his son *Isaac* into the east-country, could not consistently with his character be less careful in that *other* branch of paternal duty, viz. the regulation of their *moral* conduct, by commanding them to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. And accordingly, so far as history represents these persons as fa-

α Τύτοις ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ τοῖς Παισὶ καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἀβραὰμ ἀποικίων εὐλὰς
μηχανῶνται· καὶ τὴν τε Τρωγλοδυτικὴν καταλαμβάνουσιν, καὶ τῆς Ἰουδαί-
μου Ἀραβίας ὅσον ἐπὶ τὴν ἐρυθρὰν θάλασσαν καθεύκει· —

Joseph. Archæolog. Ed. Hudson, l. i. cap. 15.

I shall often have occasion to cite the authority of this learned writer, as most pertinent to my purpose: in his *Archæologia* he asserts the antiquity and dignity of the *Jewish* nation; and in his treatise against *Apion* he prosecutes the same argument, and vindicates the authenticity and credit of the *Mosaic* history in preference to all others; confuting the objections and misrepresentations of *Egyptian*, *Greek*, and other historians, shewing that they proceeded either from ignorance or malignity.

With regard to this small treatise concerning a subject so interesting, written in so masterly a way, so full of various learning, and that the more curious, as preserving passages of many writers whose works are lost, I cannot help wishing that it might be published by itself for the use of our academical youth.

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thers of large families, or founders of powerful kingdoms, it also suggests to us this probable conclusion, that the religious principles, which they received from their father *Abraham*, were afterwards widely diffused, and, tho' not without some variations, transmitted down to their children and households after them.

We read that the Patriarch, when he was called out by God from his idolatrous country, and kindred, took with him *Lot his brother's son, and the souls which they had gotten in Haran*. This person, bred up under his pious care, companion of his journey and fortunes, and, after his separation and migration into *Sodom*, a preacher of righteousness, and monitor to the wicked inhabitants; and by a miraculous interposition delivered out of the general destruction of the place, became the father of the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, of a numerous people; who, tho' for their inhumanity to the children of *Israel*, they were excluded from *the congregation of the Lord even to the tenth generation*, (*Deut. 23. 3.*) yet appear in scripture distinguished from the sinful idolatrous nations, who were marked out for destruction; and therefore probably may be presumed in some measure to

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to have reaped the benefit of these traditional patriarchal instructions, which had been offered in vain to a people, who had *filled up the measure of their iniquities*.

If we proceed further, and take into consideration what might be derived from *Esau*, and all other collateral branches of the holy family; in this enlarged view of things we meet many concurrent circumstances, which point out the *effects* of that patriarchal care, which was thus approved by God: the public-spirited zeal of *Abraham* became instrumental to preserve and propagate true religion in the eastern countries. Tho' we have not any particular account recorded, yet from those religious notions, which appear to have subsisted among his posterity and dependents, we may trace out the *extensive* influence of these patriarchal instructions.

In support of this assertion I would refer the serious enquirer to the most ancient book of *Job*: he will there find such a scheme of religious principles, as seems to point out the sacred original. Some of *Job's* friends^a in the patronymick character, by which they are described, discover their descent from the

^a *Bi'dad* the *Shuite* — *Eliphaz* the *Temanite* — *Zophar* the
c — *Elibu* the *Buzite*.

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Patriarch ; and tho' upon the whole in the course of the debate, they *had not spoken of God that which was right as his servant Job*, tho' they drew many wrong and injurious conclusions with regard to the good man under afflictions, yet in most points they appear to have had right apprehensions of the deity, and to reason upon just principles, and discover a comprehensive knowlege of religious truths. And concerning *Job* himself it must be remembered that this *greatest man of the East* was as respectable for his piety as his wealth, and was at least in a moral, if not a natural sense, as some writers with good reason suppose, a child of *Abraham*, a careful father, *that commanded his children to keep the way of the Lord: a man perfect and upright, that feared God and eschewed evil.*

Doubtless from the creation there all along subsisted some moral rules prescribed by the Creator to his creatures ; there ever did subsist some scheme of * patriarchal religion successively communicated to mankind, tho' with

a Bp *Cumberland* has wrote a learned treatise *de Legibus Patriarcharum* ; he supposes them plain and compendious, suited to the circumstances of mankind ; and by way of comment on them he refers us to the subsequent revelation made to *Moses* in which he supposes them more particularly delineated.

different

different effect in proportion to the different dispositions of the several parties, either transmitting, or receiving, the tradition; as the seed fell either upon a bad or good soil the produce was different; and tho' in many parts of the world these traditionary principles were corrupted or lost, yet the example of *Job* and his friends shew that they were preserved to good purpose.

I ought not here to omit what is observable concerning the Patriarch's *own* household and dependents; it appears that these were very numerous even after his separation from his nephew *Lot*. He prospered whithersoever he went: and it is not to be doubted, but that as other branches of his wealth, so also the numbers of persons bought with his money or born in his house multiplied by continual accessions. They of course must have consisted of different nations, *Chaldeans*, *Egyptians*, *Philistines*, *Syrians*, *Canaanites*, &c. occasionally collected in the course of his travels. These persons, bred up under the care of this pious master, and commanded to *keep the way of the Lord*, carried along with them the effects of their education, and in proportion to their dispersion into different countries became instrumental

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strumental to propagate the religious principles derived from their master. And probable it is that by the effects of his beneficence, such as he appears to have shewn to *Eliezer* the steward of his household, (*Gen. 15. 2.*) many of them became respectable heads of families, and were enabled to carry on the same design with success — so much in general is certain that his name was famous in the East, and the authority of the man, visibly distinguished by God's signal blessings, became very respectable: agreeably to this we in particular are informed, that the ancient *Persians* dignified their religion with the title of the religion of *Abraham*: from which circumstance, tho' we cannot infer that they did originally receive their system of religion from *Abraham*, yet thus much is certain, that, by assuming his name to recommend their religion, they held his character in the highest esteem and veneration.

I am aware that in enquiries of this kind into matters of remote antiquity, of which no explicit account is recorded in history, we

a Berosus — Hecataeus — Nichr. Damascen. apud Josephum. — Justin.

b Hyde, de Relig. Vet. Pers.

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are led out, as it were, into a spacious field, tracing out old footsteps not easily discernible; much attention is required in collecting notices from circumstances occasionally mentioned, and in such cases there is abundant room for *conjecture*: it is no easy matter to determine the force of evidence arising from such circumstantial considerations, or to induce men to draw uniformly the same conclusions from premises of such seeming latitude. The highest probabilities must here determine our judgment. How far these stand in favour of my general assertion will appear from the consideration of what remains to be offered on this head.

I shall accordingly produce by way of evidence a very remarkable historical fact, the practice of a religious rite originally derived from the Patriarch, the practice of *circumcision*: as far as this was admitted, so far we may from thence infer the extensive propagation of the Patriarch's religion. As to matter of fact we are informed by historians that this rite was received in several countries; tho' with a variation of circumstances, which deserve our notice. We accordingly remark the different time as well as reason of the
admini-

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administration, as set forth by ^a Josephus and ^b Origen.

Hence we are led on into a more particular enquiry concerning the *original*, and *progress*, the *time*, and *design* of this institution. It was certainly a rite of a *singular* nature, carrying in it something so *unnatural*, that there must be some *extrinsecal* reason to introduce the practice of it; and indeed there must be some *extraordinary* reason to recommend or enforce the universal observance of it in any nation. It was in itself far from being eligible: it was a painful rite; it appears not conducive to any good purpose, either civil or natural: and therefore originally instituted on a *religious* account, not by

^a Αράβις δι' ἑπτὰ εἰς τρισκαίδεκατον — Ἰσραὴλ^{ος} γὰρ ὁ κτίστης αὐτῶν τε γένος ἐν τῷ περὶ τὴν πεντήκοντον χρόνον.

Joseph. Archæol. l. 1. c. 12.

— τῶν δὲ ἐν Ἰσραὴλ καὶ κατ' Αράβων τοιοῦτον ὡς πάντας περιτομῶν τρισκαίδεκατον. Origen. Philocal. c. 23.

^b Origen against Celsus, l. 5. p. 263, Ed. Spem. remarks the different reason of the institution and practice — το δ' αὖτε τῆς τῶν Ἰσραηλίων περιτομῆς ἢ τῶν αὐτῶν τῆς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων περιτομῆς ἢ Κελχῶν· διότι καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ νομοθεσία αὐτῶν περιτομῆς — ἡ γὰρ προέσις καὶ βελούμα καὶ ὁ νόμος τῆς περιτομῆς ἀλλοίον ποιεῖ τὸ πρᾶγμα. — And again he asserts the difference between the circumcision of the Jews and that of other nations — ἡ μόνον τῆς τῶν Κελχῶν καὶ Αἰγυπτίων περιτομῆς ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν Ἰσραηλίων Αράβων καὶ τοιούτων ἀπὸ τῶν προπατέρων αὐτῶν Αβραὰμ τε Ἰσραὴλ γινώσκουσιν καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν περιτομῶν.

man's

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man's choice but by God's special appointment.

Herodotus indeed pretends to assign a special reason for this practice among the *Egyptians*, l. 2.

Τατε αἰδία περιτεμνοῦται καὶ ἀποτῆτος εἶναι,

Προτιμῶντες καὶ ἀποτῆτος εἶναι ἢ εὐπρεπεῖσθαι.

And it must also be confessed that some among the *Jews* themselves, tho' fully persuaded of its divine original, either thro' a fondness of making some new discovery; or thro' a desire of reconciling it to the apprehension of the Heathens as being a *reasonable* practice, and worthy of God who doth nothing in vain, have attempted to assign some *moral* or *natural* reasons of the institution; but such, as will be found merely fanciful and groundless; thus *Philo Judæus de Circumcis.* — and *Maimonides in More Nevoch.* And indeed some Christians also seem to have given into this notion. But after all, supposing that it was expedient on any such account, as they imagine, yet nevertheless it might also be a positive ordinance of God instituted on a very *different* account; yea the very improbability of its being appointed or admitted, for the sake of any such expediency,

is

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is a presumptive argument that the true history of the institution is that which is delivered in holy writ. What that is I proceed now to consider. From hence we learn that God, on his part promising to *Abraham* uncommon blessings and his seed after him in their generations, establishes with him this everlasting Covenant, *Gen. XVII. 10, 11, &c.* *this is my Covenant which ye shall keep between me, and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised: this shall be the ^aToken of the Covenant between me and you: he that is born in thy house, and he, that is bought with thy money of any stranger, who is not of thy seed, must needs be circumcised: the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my Covenant.* The sacred historian here sets forth in plain explicit terms the *original*, the *time*, and the *design* of the institution, which could not on any other footing be accounted for. God enters into a Covenant with *Abraham*, exclusive of all other people: he ordains circum-

^a Thus *Josephus* *Archæol. l. 1. c. 10.* προτιταξι δε βυλομενος [ὁ Θεός] το αὐτου γένος μνην τοῖς ἀλλοῖς μὴ συμπεφυρμενον περιτεμνεσθαι, καὶ τὸ τοῖον οὐδὲν μετα το γεννηθῆναι.

Thus also *Justin Martyr* in his dialogue with *Trypho*, ἡ γὰρ ἀπὸ Ἀβραάμ περιτεμνὴ εἰς σημεῖον ἐδόθη ἵνα ἦτε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλῶν ἔθνων ἀφωρισμένοι.

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cision,

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cision, as the peculiar *Token* of this Covenant: this is supposed to be a *mark of distinction*: in this view we cannot suppose that God would have made choice of that particular rite, if it had been in *prior* or *common* use among the *Egyptians*, or any other nations; for indeed, if it was common, it would cease to be a *Token*, or distinguished mark of God's Covenant. But with regard to the *Egyptians* in particular, from whom some derive their scheme of wisdom both political and religious, it is most improbable that this consecrated seal of a Covenant of grace and pledge of God's blessing appropriated to the family of *Abraham* should be borrowed from *them* of all people on the earth; from the prophane posterity of *Ham*, the son distinguished by the *curse* of his father *Noah*; from a nation, with whom God's chosen people were cautioned to hold no religious communications: from whom they were separated, as by a middle wall of partition, by the intervention of an

a *Theodoret* in his excellent discourses entitled *παθικῶν Ἑλληνικῶν διακρίσεων*, speaking of the different manners and constitutions of the *Israelites*, and *Egyptians* makes the following remark — *Θυεὶν μὲν συνεζώρησε, ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα θυεῖ· οὐτε γὰρ τοῖς ψευδοθεοῖς Αἰγυπτίων ἀλλ' αὐτὰ μόνον προσφέρειν Αἰγυπτίων θεοῦς· εὐθεοποιοῦν γὰρ τοὶ πολλοὶ τότε καὶ τὸν Βοῦν Αἰγυπτίῳ, καὶ τὸ πρόβατον, καὶ τὴν αἴγα, καὶ τὴν περιστέρην, καὶ τὴν τρυγόναν, καὶ ἄλλα αὐτῶν*

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operose system of rites and ceremonies; which seem calculated by their divine lawgiver in *contradiction* to the customs and manners of the *Egyptians*, which they were forbidden to imitate. So improbable is this supposition, that the practice was originally derived from the *Egyptians*. And from what other quarter the derivation of it can be accounted for, is still more hard to say.

However let us take into consideration the evidence of prophane history on this head.

* The most ancient Greek Historian, who was

των ουκ εδωδιμων, αλλ' ακαθαρτων καλουμενων ——— Ταις μιν δοκουσι
θεοις απηγορευσεσθαι, ενομοθετησε δε αυτω θυνει τα πρωτη παρ
αυτων προσκυνουμενα; ινα τα θυνει μαθωσι μη θεους νομιζειν τα ας
επειρα θυομενα· δια τοι τουτο και χειρινη αυτους μεταλαγχανει κρειων
δικαλωσιν, επειδη τουτων μοιων Αιγυπτιοι μεταλαμβανουσι των αλλων
απεχομενοι. Ed. Sylbur. Serm. 1. p. 105.

a *Herodotus*, 1. 2. has several passages concerning circumcision: — αλλα τοιςι δη και μαλλον οτι μενουσι παντων ανθρωπων Κολ-
χαι, Αιγυπτιοι, και Αιθιοπες περιτιμιονται τα αυδια απ' αρχης· Φοι-
νικες δε και Συριοι οι εν Παλαιστεινη· και ουτοι ομολογουσι παρ Αιγυπ-
τιων μεμαθηκεναι. We here ask what people *Herodotus* has in
view by this description Συριοι οι εν Παλαιστεινη — he does not
mean the *Philistines*, who stand distinguished by the character
of *uncircumcised*, he certainly means the *Jeus*: but then his
assertion is false, since it is certain that they derive this prac-
tice not from the *Egyptians* but from *divine* appointment.

Herodotus, taking it for granted that this institution was
originally *Egyptian*, makes use of this circumstance as a proof
that the Colchians and some nations were of *Egyptian* extra-
ction: φαινονται μιν γαρ εοιλες οι Κολχοι Αιγυπτιοι on this account.

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a traveller and admirer of *Egyptian* antiquities, simply records this matter of fact; and remarks the practice as singular and appropriated to a few particular nations, viz. “the
“*Cholcans, Egyptians, Ethiopians*; the *Phe-*
“*nicians* also, and those *Syrians*, who were the
“inhabitants of *Palestine*; and these acknowlege

— τα αἰδοῖα αἰδοῖ μιν ὥς ἐγένοντο, πλὴν οἱ ἀπὸ τούτων
ἐμάδον· Αἰγυπτῖοι δὲ περιτεμνοντά· — And again speaking of
the *Syrioi* — ἔτι γὰρ εἰσὶν οἱ περιτεμνομένοι ἀνδράπων μόνον, καὶ ἔτι
φαίνονται Αἰγυπτῖοι ποιεῖν κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ. Αὐτοὶ δὲ Αἰγυπτῖον
καὶ Αἰθιοπῶν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡττον ὀκότεροι παρὰ τῶν ἑτέρων ἐξέμαδον· ἀρ-
χαιὸν γὰρ τι φαίνεται εἶναι. This is the purport of what *Herodo-*
tus has asserted; and upon what slight grounds is very appa-
rent, since in this last clause he falters in his judgment con-
cerning the original of this practice. He certainly appears to
have known very little of the history of the *Jews*, not to have
heard that they ever resided in *Egypt*, a circumstance of which
he would have made use to this purpose: but takes for grant-
ed what he could not prove, ascribing to the *Egyptians* of
course a custom he could not otherwise account for.

Diodorus Siculus, a most accurate searcher of antiquities,
tho' he assures us that in general he gives no great weight to
the testimony of *Herodotus*; yet, for want of better informa-
tion, gives the like account: το τε Κολχῶν ἔθνος ἐν τῇ Ποντῇ
καὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀναμίσσον Ἀραβίας καὶ Συρίας οἰκοῦντι τινὰς ὁρμηθιν-
τας παρ' αὐτῶν· διὸ καὶ παρὰ τοῖς γένεσι τούτοις ἐκ παλαιῶν παρὰ-
δίδωται το περιτεμνέειν τοὺς γινόμενους παῖδας ἐξ Αἰγυπτίου μετεμ-
πορευομένου τοῦ νομίμου. — And again, ὅτι δὲ φασὶ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων τινὰς
καταλειφθέντας περὶ τὴν Μαίωτιν λίμνην συνησθᾶν καὶ το Κολχῶν
ἔθνος· ὅτι δὲ τούτο το γένος Αἰγυπτιακὸν εἰς σημεῖον εἰς το περιτεμνε-
ῖν τοὺς ἀνδράποὺς παραπλησίως τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις διαμεινόντος τοῦ νο-
μίμου παρὰ τοῖς ἀποικοῖς καθάπερ καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις. L. I.

“ that

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“that they learned this practice from the “*Egyptians*.” It seems then that the origin of this institution is by him referred to the *Egyptians*: but it may here be pertinently questioned *who* are those *Egyptians*, here spoken of: for I am persuaded that, upon a strict examination into the affair, they will appear to be the children of *Israel*, who so long sojourned in the land of *Egypt*, and on that account were involved in the common denomination: the *Greeks*, who were strangers to the true history of a people with whom they had no intercourse, unacquainted with their polity, civil and religious, and knowing nothing of their antiquity and true original, were governed by imperfect common reports, and by the similarity of practice considered them as a Colony of *Egyptians*; who, migrating into *Palestine*, carried along with them the manners and customs of their country.

* *Strabo*, a diligent searcher of antiquities, for want of better light, gives credit to the

a *Strabo* certainly, speaking of the migration of the *Hebreus* out of *Egypt*, mistakes them for a Colony of *Egyptians*:

— οὗτοι δὲ οὗτοι μιγαδὼν ἢ κρατούσα μαλιστα φημὶ τῶν περὶ ἱερὸν τοῦ ἐν Ἱεροσολυμοῖς πεισινομιῶν Αἰγυπτίους ἀποφαίνει τοὺς προγόνους τῶν νῦν Ἰουδαίων καλουμένων· Μωσὴς γὰρ τις τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἱερῶν, ἔχων μέρος τῆς καλουμένης χώρας, ἀπὸ τῆς ἐνδεῆς ἐκείνης, διακρίνας τὰ καθίστατα, καὶ συνεξήραν αὐτὰ πολλοὶ τιμῶντες τοῦ θεοῦ· ἐφ’ ἧν γὰρ,

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prevailing report, and speaks of *Moses*, the leader of the colony, as one of the *Egyptian priests*. So little did they know of God's chosen people, or the original of this religious institution.

εκείνος και ἐδίδασκεν, ὡς οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονουσιν οἱ Αἰγυπτίῳι θηριοῖς εἰκα-
ζοῦντες και βουκχημασι το θεον· οὐδ' οἱ Λίβυες, οὐκ ἐν δὲ οὐδ' οἱ Εἰλη-
ναι, ἀνδρωπομορφους τυπουντες. Ed. Par. p. 761.

However this account is founded upon better grounds than that of *Herodotus*. He remarks the *cause* of the *Israelites* migration out of *Egypt*, viz. a disagreement in *Religious* as well as *Political* matters. He also on other occasions mentions *Moses* with a decent respect: τοιοῦτος δὲ τις ἦν και ὁ Μωσῆς, και οἱ ἀγδιζαμενοι ἐκείνον, τας αρχας λαβόντες ἐν Φαυλας — οἱ δὲ διαδίζα-
μενοι χρονους μὲν τινας ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς διεμειναν δικαιοπραχοῦντες, και θεοσεβῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς οὐτες· ἐπειτ' ἐφισταμεναν ἐπὶ τὴν ἱερουνην το μὲν
πρωτον διαιδαιμονων ἐπειτα τυραννικων ἀνδρων ἐκ μὲν τῆς διαιδαι-
μονιας αἱ τῶν βρωματων ἀποχεῖσεις, ὧν και νυν ἴδος ἐσιν αὐτοῖς ἀπε-
χῶσαι, και περίομαι και ἐκλῶμαι. — και το περίομενν και τα θηλια
ἐκτεμνεῖν, ὅπῃρ και τοῖς Ιουδαῖοις νομιμον· και ἔτσι δὲ εἰσιν Αἰγυπτίῳι
το ἀνεκαθεν καθάπερ εἰρηκαμεν ἐν τῷ περὶ αὐτῶν λόγῳ. — We per-
ceive here in these several relations a strange jumble of inco-
herent notions, such as the writer could pick up in the course
of his enquiries — and from hence we perceive the want of an
uniform authentick account of the *Jewish* nation and ordi-
nances, which the sacred history only hath given, he, like
others before him, supposes circumcision an *Egyptian* institu-
tion, and yet makes this as well as βρωματων ἀποχεῖσεις the
effect of superstition — as for his ἐκτεμνεῖν τα θηλια, whatever
he might find in *Egyptian* history, there were certainly no
grounds for it in the *Mosaic* system — as to his mistaking the
Israelites for a Colony of *Egyptians*, and *Moses* their leader for
an *Egyptian* Priest, this is a pardonable error, when we con-
sider their long residence in *Egypt* before their migration: this
circumstance might give occasion to such a notion.

And

And now what is the sum of the evidence collected from [prophane history? it seems mention is made of circumcision, as a singular practice received by some certain nations: — but no *time* ascertained, nothing declared with regard to the *occasion* or *design* of the ordinance. But a groundless presumption advanced, that it was originally derived from the *Egyptians*. What a defective unsatisfactory account is this? and what conclusion can be drawn from premises, so questionable and precarious? we do not find it established by any *law*, nor was it a *national* rite, universally observed: there was no certain *time* of it's administration fixed: the application was not to *all* in general, but was appropriated to some particular persons, ^a to *priests*, and those

a *Origen*, l. 2. in Ep. ad *Rom.* expressly asserts that every priest, every student of geometry, astronomy, astrology, of hieroglyphicks, every Hierophantes received circumcision as a rite of initiation, which added a peculiar distinction and veneration to their character.

With this view *Pythagoras* was said to have submitted to the operation: φασι δὲ καὶ τὸν Πυθαγόραν τῆς περιτομῆς ἀνεχόμενον Plutarch. Numen. Porph. de Pythagora, as cited by *Theodoret*, Serm. i. p. 6. and moreover adds, φασι δὲ αὐτοὺς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ οὐ μόνον παρ' Αἰγυπτίων ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἑβραίων τὰ περὶ τοῦ οὗτος διδασκόμενον Θεοῦ· καὶ ταῦτα μὲν διδάσκει ὁ μὲν Πλούταρχος ὁ Βοιωτὸς· διδάσκει δὲ καὶ Πορφύριος, ὁ κατὰ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρειας λυτῆστος καὶ μὲν τοῖς Νουμηνίους ὁ Πυθαγόρειος, καὶ ἑτέροι πολλοί· φασι δὲ —

who

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who were to be initiated in religious mysteries: from which circumstance we conclude that there was conceived to be in it something *sacred* and extraordinary.

Compare now the scripture history: here you have an account full and determinate, and in all respects satisfactory: the *origin* is here declared, *viz.* by God's positive appointment: the *time* of institution ascertained, *viz.* in the ninety ninth year of *Abraham*: the time of *administration* to every male child determined, *viz.* the *eighth* day after birth: the *end* and *design* pointed out, *viz.* as the *seal* of God's Covenant and distinguished *mark* of his chosen people. You from hence perceive the absurdity of the supposition, that the *Israelites* should derive this practice from the *Egyptians*. The contrary supposition is more probable: *viz.* that the *Egyptians*, who are represented as fond of religious rites and ordinances, as they perceived the patriarch and his posterity favoured with more eminent degrees of religious knowledge, and withal continually protected by the more immediate hand of God's providence, might be induced to adopt this rite, the effects of which appeared so beneficial; hoping by the observance
of

of this institution to recommend themselves to the favour of the God of *Abraham*.

This indeed of the two is the most probable supposition: but in fact the particular *time*, when this practice was first admitted among them, is not known. We do not discover that it was admitted in the time of *Joseph*, whose example in this respect they might be inclined to imitate — ^a or in the time of *Moses*, who would not probably have omitted such a remarkable circumstance in his history. It is well known that they had a conti-

a The following passages out of Theodoret. Θεοδωρετ. deserves our notice. Serm. 1. περι πίσεως, p. 6. Ed. Sylbury.

Ἀβραὰμ γὰρ τοῦ Πατριάρχου παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰν ὅλων τῆς περιτομῆς ἐντολὴν δέξαμεν, ἐφύλαξε μὲν αὐτὴν τὸ γένος ὡκῆσεν δ' ἐπὶ πλείστον τὴν Αἰγυπτόν· ἐξηλάσαν δὲ τοὺς Ἑβραίους οἱ Αἰγυπτῖοι. He here asserts the divine institution of circumcision: the observance of it by *Abraham* and his posterity; and from thence the derivation to the *Egyptians*. Ὅτι δὲ οὐκ ἦν παλαιὸς νόμος Αἰγυπτίοις περιτεμεῖν τὰ βρέφη ἢ τοῦ Φαραὼ θυγατὴρ μάρτυς ἀξιοχρεῖται· τῇ γὰρ οὐδ' τοῦ ποταμοῦ προτεριμμένοι ἐβουλόνατο τὸν Μωυσήν, εὐθύς γὰρ τὴν περιτομὴν εἶδεν, καὶ τὸ γένος ἀπέγνω, καὶ τοὺς Ἑβραίων ἐκγόνοι τοῦ βρέφους ὠνομαστῆν. He here concludes that circumcision was not an original practice common to all the *Egyptians*, but rather peculiar to the *Israelites*: supposing that by this mark of distinction *Moses* was discovered to be an *Hebrew* child. This is an ingenious conjecture founded on the supposition of a probable circumstance, though not expressly mentioned in the sacred history, where we barely read that, upon opening the ark, and seeing the child, *Pharaoh's* daughter said, this is a child of the *Hebrews*.

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nual intercourse with the *Ismaelites* and *Ara-
bians*, and perhaps on some account or other
they might adopt it from them. However,
from what has been before remarked, it ap-
pears that the practice was not universal, but
appropriated to certain orders of men, and
administred on special occasions. On the whole
the accounts given of it by prophane histo-
rians is so vague and indeterminate, that no-
thing certain and satisfactory can from thence
be collected.

Of this we may be assured that *Joseph* and
his brethren did not receive circumcision of
the *Egyptians*: they certainly carried in their
bodies the seal of God's Covenant from *Ca-
naan* into *Egypt*. And now can it well be
supposed that they, who worshipped the God
of their father *Abraham*, should adopt *this*,
or any other religious rite from that idolatrous
nation. The contrary supposition of the two
is the most probable, *viz.* that in those in-
stances, in which any similitude is found, the
practice of the latter was derived from the
former.

From the nature of things, as has been
before remarked, we presume, that a rite, of
a nature so singular, would never have been
admitted but upon some *extraordinary* account:
and

and doubtless the reasons of its institution were at first enquired into, and religious doctrines accompanied its first admission: they, who received circumcision, certainly received it as the means of procuring God's special favour; and accordingly we presume that those nations, which carried in their bodies the seal of *Abraham's* Covenant, together with the history of the patriarch, received also some principles of his *religion* instilled into their minds.

So that, when their children should ask them, "what meaneth this mark in our fore-skin? why are we thus distinguished from all other families on the earth?" then they shall say, this is the *Token of the Covenant* which God made with the patriarch *Abraham*, a man most famous in his generation, and the chosen instrument of great blessings to mankind. So that the observance of this rite, as it naturally suggests such reflexions, becomes very significant and useful to the purposes of religion, and, together with the history of the good patriarch, carries an instructive moral lesson; and, when attended to in its consequences, becomes instrumental to preserve the worship of the true God.

We

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We know by experience that the *reasons* of institutions, both divine and human, may be lost while the outward *act* subsists : yet at the same time we cannot but suppose that they were originally communicated and well understood, however in succeeding times obliterated or corrupted. Thus in the case of *sacrifices* ; which, (as we cannot account for on better grounds,) we ascribe to a positive divine appointment, it is probable that God, when he enjoined this mode of worship, did also reveal in some measure to our first parents the *reason* of the institution, as prefiguring the means of their redemption : and, tho' the notices of the thing signified by this outward act were in after ages quite effaced, yet the universal practice of the mode among all nations was instrumental to preserve a sense of religion in the world, and keep up a dependence on the Deity, and an expectation of some important blessing. Likewise in the present case, with regard to those nations, which are said to have admitted the practice of circumcision, tho' the reasons of the institution were gradually impaired and lost, yet it is a fair presumption that these were originally known : we cannot suppose a rite of so singular a nature could have gain'd admission at all, but upon some extraordinary religious

religious account; which we plainly discover in the practice considered in this view, as derived from the authority of the patriarch *Abraham*.

And therefore we consider those passages in prophane history which mention the observance of this rite among *Egyptians, Arabians*, and some other nations, as so far from being *objections* against our general assertion, that they rather are arguments in our *favour*, virtually carrying in them a proof of the extensive propagation of *Abraham's* religion, of which circumcision was ordained as the visible mark, and distinguishing token. If then it be allowed that these nations received circumcision as derived from *Abraham*, the way seems opened for admitting *another* probable conclusion founded on parity of reason, *viz.* with regard to some *other* religious notions or rites, which in common with God's chosen people they admit, we need not be at loss in accounting for their *original* and derivation; the highest *antiquity* carries with it the greatest *authority*; and, since the *Mosaick* history hath the preeminence above all others in this respect, from thence we trace out their extraction; and consider them, as originally derived from some positive *divine* institutions,
of

of which they appear to be the resemblances or corruptions.

- I have taken occasion to treat so largely on *this* head, inasmuch as some men of learning, but more conversant in prophane than sacred history, and fond of novelty, have taken pains to advance the authority of *Egyptian* antiquities beyond all bounds to the discredit of *revelation*. If they would with impartiality compare the evidences, they would find a conviction of their mistake or ignorance, while they here perceive a fountain head much higher, from which all their imperfect notices might be derived. For surely, from the very face of things, as well as the circumstances already mentioned, it appears far more probable that the *Egyptians*, and thro' them, all other nations should borrow their knowledge from the *patriarchs*, from those extraordinary teachers successively raised up by God, than that they should be the authors of discoveries so unaccountable, and prescribe to those, who were favoured with God's more immediate care and direction, and withal were particularly cautioned by their divine lawgiver not to hold any intercourse with the manners and customs of that prophane people.

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I am sensible that the invention of arts and sciences, of knowlege religious and political, is by writers of prophane history ultimately ascribed to the *Egyptians*, for they knew no higher source than that, from which they mediately drew their notions: and moreover that upon their authority some learned men among Christians have laid great stress upon the antiquity of the *Egyptians*, even in competition with the most authentick records of sacred history; it may therefore be proper to offer some further considerations on this head, and disprove this claim of the *Egyptians*, and shew the vanity of their pretensions to a character which belonged to God's chosen people, from whom it will appear that they had opportunities of borrowing some branches of their religious knowlege.

It is allowed in general that the reputation of the *Egyptian* learning was very considerable in the world. The sacred historian, (1 Kings. 4. 30.) speaking magnificently of *Solomon's* wisdom, thus expresses himself, *that Solomon's wisdom excelled all the wisdom of the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.* Now this comparison supposes the fame of the *Egyptians* for learning as well as the East country; otherwise the preference in this respect

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spect would not have done the honour intended to the high character of *Solomon*.

Again we find this implied in *St. Stephen's* answer to the accusation of blasphemy against *Moses* (Acts. 7.) where he, mentioning every thing to his honour, adds this circumstance, that *he was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and deeds.*

Be it then allowed that the *Egyptians*, in a comparative view, were eminent for the extent of their knowledge: yet it by no means follows from thence that the *Israelites* borrowed from *them* the practice of circumcision, or any other religious rite. That the contrary supposition, *viz.* that the *Israelites* might become their instructors in this respect, is far more probable will appear from the following considerations.

Tho' God's chosen people were indeed kept separate, and not allowed to intermix with their heathen neighbours by alliances, and marriage, or any religious intercourse; yet, that their polity both civil and religious should in some measure be known by the nations round about them, is plainly implied and supposed by their lawgiver in that pathetick speech (Deut. 4.) where he thus addresses them: *behold I have taught you statutes and judgments,*

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judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me : keep therefore and do them ; for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, who shall hear these statutes, and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people : for what nation is there so great, that hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things we call upon him for. This supposition is founded in the nature of things : doubtless a people, thus visibly protected by the interposition of divine power, by signs and wonders and an out-stretched arm, must of course excite the attention and admiration of all observers. Their Laws, Customs, and religious Rites, and all circumstances, relating to a people distinguished by such a peculiar constitution, would raise the curiosity of every inquisitive mind, and extort the approbation of the judicious ; that *surely this was a wise and understanding people ;* the proof of which they discerned in the effects of God's extraordinary providence superintending, and protecting, a favorite nation ; *so nigh was the Lord their God to them in all things !* this observation would naturally strike their apprehension, and over-rule their prejudices against the singularity of religious usages, which they

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perceived accompanied with singular marks of the divine favour.

So much may be remarked in general: but with regard to the religious knowlege of the *Egyptians* in particular, it may be observed that they had some peculiar advantages above other people: for, besides what might be transmitted to them from the patriarch *Noah*, the common source of traditional knowlege, they had *peculiar* opportunities of a nearer communication with respectable persons, to whom God made special manifestations of his will; with *Abraham*, and the patriarchs, who successively resided in their country. An inquisitive people, fond of religious novelties, may be presumed to have profited by their instruction and example. In particular it is to be observed, that one of these, the third from *Abraham*, "a man, in whom was the spirit of

a *Trogus Pompeius*, in Justin's abridgment, l. 36. gives a singular account of *Joseph*, such as appears to have been at the second hand taken from the sacred history.

Minimus ætate inter fratres *Joseph* fuit; cujus excellens ingenium veriti fratres clam interceptum peregrinis mercatoribus vendiderunt; a quibus deportatus in *Ægyptum*, cum magicas ibi artes solerti ingenio percepisset, brevi ipse Regi percarus fuit: nam prodigiorum sagacissimus erat, et somniorum primus intelligentiam condidit; nihilque divini juris humanique ei incognitum videbatur, adeo ut etiam sterilitatem agrorum ante multos annos providerit; perissetque omnis *Ægyptus*

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God, by a wonderful vicissitude of fortune, or rather by the extraordinary conduct of God's providence, became governor of the land of *Egypt*, which by his wisdom he had preserved: he was advanced next to *Pharaoh* in dignity, and made dispenser of his substance, and ruler of all his house; invested with a sovereign authority to inform his Princes after his will, and teach his Senators wisdom. The influence of his power was in every respect very considerable; and especially among the "priests,

gyptus fame, nisi monitu ejus Rex edicto servari per multos annos fruges jussisset; tantaque experimenta ejus fuerunt, ut non ab homine sed a Deo responsa dari viderentur. Moses ejus filius fuit &c.

We perceive this account in the main is agreeable to sacred history; tho' mixed with a gross blunder in making *Moses* the son of *Joseph*, and in several other circumstances in the history of the *Hebrews*.

α Της δε χώρας εις τρια μέρη διηρημένης τῶν μὲν πρῶτῶν μερίδα εἶχε το τῶν ἱερῶν συστημα, μεγίστης ἐνδόξης τύχανον παρὰ τοῖς ἑσχαρίοις, ἂλ γὰρ τε τῶν εἰς θεοὺς εὐσεβείαν, καὶ ἂλ γὰρ το πλείων συνεσι τοὺς ἀνδρας τουτους ἐκ παιδείας εἰσφεροδαι: and with regard to the dignity of their character they were distinguished from others being ἀτελεῖς καὶ δευτερευοντες κατὰ τον βασιλεα ταις τε δοξαις καὶ ταις ἐξουσιαις. From this account given by Diodorus Siculus, which is agreeable to the sacred history, it appears that the priests in *Egypt* were a respectable order, persons of high rank, fortune, and leisure, and constituted a third state of the kingdom: they were initiated in all kinds of learning civil and religious; and were moreover distinguished by the mark of circumcision, as they conceived that there was something sacred in that rite;

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the directors of their religious worship; to the chief of this order he by marriage bore a near relation; and it is observable that, during his administration, which continued above eighty years, they were distinguished by immunities and many signal marks of favour. From the nature of things, and the character of this great person, we may fairly collect, that he became an instrument of preserving the sense of true religion in the minds of a grateful people: nor is it hard to conceive that the same authority, which could bring about such a remarkable alteration in *civil* property, might also introduce either reformatations, or improvements, in *religious* matters.

If we consider the high dignity of *Joseph's* station, and his connexion with persons of the first rank in the state, it might reasonably be expected that the *Egyptians* should reverence his authority, be directed by his wisdom, and inclined to imitate his example. Consider the extraordinary honour paid to this person: *and Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find such a man as this is? a man in whom the spirit of*

and tho' the original of this practice is not mentioned in history, yet it is not an improbable supposition that they adopted it in conformity to their governor, in whom confessedly *was the spirit of God.*

God

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God is? and Pharaoh said unto Joseph, forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art; thou shalt be over my house and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Why then should it be thought a thing incredible, that the most valuable branches of wisdom, for which the Egyptians were renowned, should be derived from him, in whom was the spirit of God? I am indeed sensible that there was a natural reason, which probably introduced arts and sciences among them sooner than other nations: the necessities of their situation quickened their attention, and made them accurate observers of the heavenly bodies, and the various seasons &c. But at the same time it must also be supposed that the instructions of such an extraordinary master, directing the affairs of the whole kingdom, must have greatly contributed to their improvement in several branches of wisdom, mechanical, political, and religious. As to the first there still subsist in the country monuments which bear his name, granaries, bridges, canal, lake; which perpetuate his memory as a publick benefactor: immense works, which did require the most comprehensive knowlege in the

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contrivance, and wealth and power in the execution, such as concurred in the character of this wise governor; who had collected the treasure of other nations as well as of *Egypt*, to be expended in works of publick utility: As to the *second*, this seems to be readily allowed: The country owed its preservation to his providential care, and the king the advancement of his power, and the security of his government. In a word, the flourishing state of *Egypt* gave ample testimony to the prudent administration of this prime minister. As to the *last*, which more especially falls under our consideration, since the sacred history contains no particular account, we do not presume to attribute the force of demonstration to any bold conjecture; be this the unenvied prerogative of learned *Hypercriticks*; we shall be contented to guide our judgment by the fairest probabilities, which the case admits. From the very character of *Joseph*, as a person eminent for his piety as well as wisdom, we are led to suppose that he was not careless or unconcerned in the important affair of *religion*; but, as a true child of *Abraham*, taught to keep the way of the Lord, and moreover immediately directed by the spirit of God, he became an instructor to the
Egyptians,

Abraham's Religion represented. 23

Egyptians, and taught them to keep the way of the Lord. And while we consider his high station and dignity, and alliance with the principal order of the kingdom; we may withal conceive the probability of some considerable moral effect, thro' the influence both of his instruction and example, to inform the princes after his will and teach the senators wisdom, wisdom religious, as well as political. They are indeed represented as a people very prone to superstition; but we do not find that in the time of *Joseph* they were represented as *Idolaters*: why may we not suppose that by his authority the worship of the true God was preserved among them? their heroes were not yet deified, nor their Gods multiplied in a ridiculous variety. If, after his example, the priests did then adopt circumcision (for they are said to be distinguished from all others by this rite of initiation) we may consider this as the highest proof, that they could give of their regard for his religion. But, if they admitted it in subsequent ages on any account, then the boasted claim of its high antiquity in *Egypt* must be dropped; and the *Greek* historians, who ascribe its original to the *Egyptians*, hereby stand confuted.

Upon

Upon the whole, those, who upon the credit of prophane history magnify the *Egyptian* wisdom, as the universal source of knowlege, are desired not to take matters hastily upon trust, and upon such questionable and precarious evidence : but to look back to some *higher* antiquity, and trace up the derivation of religious rites from their true and certain original, and this is to be found only in the *Mosaick* history, the most ancient and authentick history in the whole world. Here they will read that circumcision was a positive *divine* ordinance, instituted as a seal and token of a covenant made with the patriarch *Abraham*. Here also they will learn that there was in *Egypt* an inspired teacher, presiding and directing the affairs of the kingdom for above eighty years : from hence they may with appearance of greater probability derive those notions and institutions in the system of religion, which originally were not unworthy of the Deity ; though in length of time rendered obscure and unintelligible, being corrupted by fiction, and disguised by allegory.

To *Joseph* then we refer them, as the principal author or improver of *Egyptian* wisdom : doubtless great was his reputation in all the land of *Egypt* : and we cannot well conceive
the

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the impression of his virtues and the benefits of his ministry soon effaced. It was a long time, before a king arose, who knew not Joseph, nor the Lord God of Israel. From this period we date the degeneracy of the Egyptians. Innovations in polity civil and religious took place together, and injustice soon accompanied irreligion. But surely in the meanwhile the long residence of a people among them, worshipping God after the way of their fathers, and distinguished by visible marks of temporal prosperity, may be supposed to have had a considerable influence on their minds, and inclined them to adopt into their system those doctrines and institutions, which appeared so acceptable to the Deity. Upon the whole, prophane history represents the Egyptians, as a busy inquisitive people, studious of all arts and sciences, and more especially fond admirers and collectors of Religious knowlege. And withal, from the account given it appears that they were favoured with long-continued opportunities of receiving instructions in this respect from those who were mediately taught of God: and on this supposition we can more probably account for the

a Θεοσιβεις ησαν περισως και μαλιστα παντων των ανθρωπων.
Herodot. l. 2.

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derivation of notions and institutions, which they had in common with the *Israelites*.

But to this we may add that they felt also convictions of another kind : the various plagues and punishments, which they suffered, carried with them a severe lesson of instruction to fear the God of the *Hebrews*. The baffled magicians acknowledged a superior power, the immediate finger of God : the discomfited army of *Pharoah* found in the event that *the God of Israel fought against the Egyptians*. Surely the memory of such remarkable transactions must have strongly affected their apprehensions, and impressed on their minds an awful dread of the *Jehovah*, who thus triumphed over the Gods of the *Egyptians*.

But it appears that in after-ages they deviated from the simplicity of patriarchal religion ;— they affected to be wiser than their teacher in whom was the spirit of *God* ; preferring the praise of *invention* to established truths of the traditional *patriarchal* scheme : *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened : so that through wisdom, or the abuse of their philosophy, they knew not God.* Such is the case,

case, when the over-curious wit of men pretends to make new refinements in the scheme of religious worship, and they oppose their own fancies to the wisdom, which is from above. The *Egyptians* had certainly uncommon advantages, which they either neglected, or industriously abused: these notions, which originally were derived from a pure fountain, passing through many a foul channel, were by degrees grossly corrupted: new speculations took place, and Theology was made an unintelligible science; plain truths were wrapt up in obscurity, or disguised by error: till at length that part of the world, once so very famous for wisdom, degenerated into the most absurd superstition and idolatry: so that in a moral sense, *there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt, while the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*

Yet this is the country so highly celebrated in prophane history, as the mother of all arts and sciences, as the storehouse of all knowledge political and religious. Now, on supposition that this was really the case, it would follow, that to have instructed the *Egyptians* would be virtually the same thing, as to have become teachers to a considerable part of *man-kind*: and, if it appears from records of history,

tory, the most authentick as being most ancient, that God did in fact make positive revelations of his will to the patriarchs and his chosen people — and that the *Egyptians*, as they had frequent opportunities, did most probably borrow from hence many religious notions and rites, the credit of which, amidst the variety of corruptions, subsisted a long while in the world, we have before us a light shining in a dark place, by which we trace out the derivation of practices not easily accounted for on any other grounds; and refer them not to an uncertain precarious cause, to *human* invention, but to a *sacred* original, to *divine* appointment. From which premises we ultimately infer the extensive propagation of patriarchal religion; or a mediate revelation, successively communicated to mankind.

If then the claim of the *Egyptians* be disproved, and their authority over-ruled, the case seems clear with regard to *other* nations which confessedly claimed under *them*: the title of Derivatives falls together with that of their Original. Now the *means* of communication with *Egypt* were open and free. It is well known that that country was the flourishing seat both of commerce and literature; trading nations were of course led thither amidst

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midst the carrying on *other* traffick, men of curiosity had an opportunity of making some *new* acquisition, and importing into their own country the *learning* of the ^a *Egyptians*, their religious, as well as political knowlege.

What is said here of the *Egyptians* in this respect may in some measure be also applied to the ^b *Phenicians*, they carryed on the most extensive navigation and trade to distant parts of the world: at the same time it is to be remarked that their country was adjoining to the holy land; this circumstance of their situation must give them *opportunity* of enquiries, and of knowing in some measure the religious rites and manners of the *Israelites*: while their navigation might be instrumental to transmit notices of this kind to various

^a *Herodotus*, who derives the learning of the *Greeks* from the *Egyptians*, speaks thus, l. 2. — *ἡ δὲν διὰ πάντα τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν θεῶν ἐξ Αἰγυπτίου ἐληλυθεῖ εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα· διότι μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν βαρβάρων καὶ πυρρᾶνομενὸς ὥτως εὕρισκω Ἴον.*

^b *Ισέον* δὲ ὡς *Φοινίκης* *πορθαῖοι* ὄντες καὶ ἀγχιτερμονές παρὰ τούτων (sc. *Εβραίων*) ἐμαθαί, ἐπερ ἐμάθον, τὴν ἀληθειαν — *Theodoret*. Therap. Serm. 1. p. 10.

Τοῖς τε παρὰ τὴν τῆς *Φοινίκης* κάλεικουσιν ἡ περὶ τὰς κατὰ τὴν ἐμπορίας ποσὶν διὰ το φιλοχρηματεῖν — *Αἱ* τοῦτο οἱ *Φοινίκης* μὲν αὐτοὶ κατ' ἐμπορίαν τοῖς *Εβραίοις* εἰσπλεόντες ἐνθὺς ἐγνώθησαν, καὶ *Αἱ* τούτων *Αἰγυπτίοις*. Sect. 12. And thus *Josephus* in his treatise against *Apion* traces out the connexion and communication of the *Greeks* with the *Egyptians*, through the *Phenicians*, with whom, as a trading nation, they had intercourse.

countries,

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countries, with which they held correspondence. In the ^a *Eastern* parts of the world, as being the first peopled and cultivated, Learning in various kinds took its rise and improvement: from thence notions both philosophical and religious were originally derived; and, being handed down by written or oral tradition, were at length conveyed to distant times and people by a gradual propagation; to *Javan, and the isles of the Gentiles*, and more eminently to that inquisitive civilized people, who boasted of their improvement in all arts and sciences, which they confessedly received from *other* nations, and yet had the arrogance

a And he moreover adds, *πῶς μὲν παρ' Αἰγυπτίους καὶ Χαλδαίοις καὶ Φοινίκῃν αὐτοὶ δηλοῦντες ομολογοῦσιν ἀρχαιοτάτῃ τε καὶ μονιμωτάτῃ εἶναι τῆς μνήμης τὴν παραδόσιν.* And again, *ἀλλὰ μὲν καὶ τοὺς ὡς τῶν οὐρανίων τε καὶ θείων ἰσχυροὺς παρ' Ἑλλήσι φιλοσοφῶντας, οἷον Φερεκυδὴν τὸν Συρίον, καὶ Πυθαγόραν, καὶ Θαλήτα, πάντες συμφωνῶς ομολογοῦσιν Αἰγυπτίων καὶ Χαλδαιῶν γενομένους μαθητάς ολίγα συγγραψαί; καὶ ταῦθ' Ἑλλήσι δοκεῖ πάντων ἀρχαιοτάτα.* Sect. 2.

Josephus, and after him *Clem. Alexand. Strom.* and *Euseb. Præpar. Evang.* l. 9. c. 6, cite *Aristobulus* as asserting that *Pythagoras* was indebted to the *Jews* for a good part of his knowledge — *πολλὰ τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν μετενεγκεν εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ δογματοποιαν* — and again, *Hermippus* in the life of *Pythagoras* speaks of him as in several points, *Ιουδαίων καὶ Ὁρακλῶν δόξας μιμουμένος καὶ μεταφέρειν εἰς αὐτῶν* — *πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ τῶν παρ' Ἰουδαίοις νομιμῶν εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ μετενεγκε φιλοσοφίαν.*

Theodoret. speaks more at large of the same point, *Serm.* 1. p. 2.

and

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and vanity to esteem all the world, beside themselves, *Barbarians*.

I am come now to the *Greeks*; their writings have been generally received and admired: from *them* we have the report and praise of *Egyptian* antiquities, to which they refer the origin of all learning: and the authority of which hath been by some writers advanced in opposition to sacred history: it will not therefore be improper to make some remarks on this head.

1. It appears that they were *industrious* and curious in their search after knowledge: some of their most eminent philosophers merely on that account travelled into *a Egypt* and *Chal-*

a Diodorus Siculus mentions several *Grecian* philosophers whose names were entered in the publick register kept by the *Egyptian* priests,

Τούτων δ' ἡμῖν διευκρινημένων ῥητεῖον ὅσοι παρ' Ἑλλήσι δαδοξασμένοι ἐπὶ σωῆσιν καὶ παιδείᾳ, παρῆσαν εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις χρόνοις, ἵνα τῶν ἐνταῦθα νομιμῶν καὶ παιδείας μεταχῶσιν· οἱ γὰρ ἱερεῖς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἰσθροῦσιν ἐκ τῶν ἀναγραφῶν, τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς βιβλίοις, παρῶσαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς Ὀρφεᾶ τε, καὶ Μουσαίου, καὶ Μελανμποδα, καὶ Δαίδαλον· ὥς δὲ τούτοις καὶ Ὀμηρον τὸν ποιητὴν, καὶ Λυκούργον τὸν Σπαρτιατὴν, ἐπὶ δὲ Σελωνίαν τὸν Ἀθηναῖον, καὶ Πλάτωνα τὸν φιλοσοφόν· ἐλθεῖν δὲ Πυθαγόραν τὸν Σάμιον, καὶ τὸν μιάθηματικόν, Εὐδοξόν, ἐπὶ δὲ Δημοκρίτον τὸν Ἀδδηρίτην, καὶ Οἰνιπόδην τὸν Χιον· πάντων δὲ τούτων σημεία διεικνύται· τῶν μὲν εἰκόνας τῶν δὲ τόπων ἢ κατασκευασμάτων ὁμωνυμίας προσηγορίας, ἐκ δὲ τῆς ἑκάστης ζηλευθείσης παιδείας ἀποδεικνύει φερουσι συνιστάτες μετιννηοχέμεν πάντα δι' αὐτὴν Ἑλληνισμῶν. Lib. i.

Diodorus

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deas; countries, which had probably received considerable improvements by the communication of the *Hebrew* learning. It is not to be doubted but that they collected many truths in the course of their enquiries; yet at the same time they seem either to have not rightly understood them, or not fairly represented them.

2. With regard to their *moral* character they discover themselves to be *vain* and arrogant, such as seemed to prefer the praise of an ingenious writer to that of an impartial historian or sober philosopher. For this reason, or for want of better information, we find them frequently contradicting one another, and endeavouring not so much to establish an important truth, as to triumph over the weakness of preceding writers, not less fanciful and erroneous than themselves. They were indeed men of a busy and enterprizing genius, and particularly ambitious of being thought authors of some *new* scheme in philosophy. With this view they digested their crude no-

Diodorus reports what he had heard: how far this evidence of the priests may be thought questionable as favouring much of vanity, I cannot say; however it countenances the general belief of the fact that the most celebrated philosophers among the *Greeks* traveled into *Egypt* in search of knowledge.

tions

Abraham's Religion represented. 49

tions in an artful manner, and adulterated the traditional principles, which they had collected, with the mixture of many plausible fancies and cunningly-devised fables. What *Diodorus Siculus* remarks, as a peculiar fault in *Herodotus*, and other writers of *Egyptian* history, may be as truly applied to the generality of the *Greek* historians: *viz.* εκαστως προκριναντες της αληθειας το παραδοξολογειν και μυθας πλαττειν ψυχαγωγιας ενεκα.

3. With regard to *antiquity*, which gives authority to writings, they are to be considered, in a comparative view, as *late* writers; removed at a great distance from the times of which they treat. They confessedly have no author more ancient than *Homer*: they do not pretend to have any certainty as to the date of facts before the *Olympiads*. *Diodorus Siculus* an author most accurate in Chronological enquiries, who had employed thirty years in compiling his historical library, adds this advertisement to the reader: that he pretends not to determine any thing with certainty before the time of the *Trojan* war, δια το μηδεν παραπηγμα παρειληφεναι ως των πιστω-ομδρον.

4. As to proper *materials* of history they seem very incompetently provided, having, as

D

Josephus

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Josephus justly observes on this occasion, for a long time no publick records, no authentick account of transactions: so that it is less to be wondered, that writers on the same subject should so widely differ in their representations; when they had no uniform *standard* to go by, and where therefore there was so much room and encouragement for *fiction*. And this is observed with regard to the antiquities of their *own* country; but with regard to the ^a *Hebrews*, God's chosen people, they never had any immediate communication with *them*: and, as to the knowlege which they received by mediate intercourse, this came chiefly from the profest enemies of that people, from the ^b *Phenicians* or *Egyptians*; who, through an hereditary prejudice, were industrious to traduce and misrepresent them. In short the notices, which they at first received, were

a *Josephus* gives these reasons why the *Greeks* had so little knowlege of the *Hebrews*: ἡμεῖς τοίνυν οὔτε χάραν οἰκοῦμεν παρὰ ἑαυτοὺς, οὔτε ἐμπειρίας χαίρομεν, οὔτε ταῖς πρὸς ἄλλους διὰ τούτων ἐπιμιξιαῖς — προσουσῆς τοίνυν τοῖς ἐρμηνέοις καὶ τῆς αἰῶνος τὸν βίον ἡμῶν ἰδιότητος, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐν παλαιαῖς χρόνοις το ποιοῦν πρὸς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἡμῶν ἐπιμιξίαν, ὡς περ Αἰγυπτίοις, μὲν τὰ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐξαγομμένα καὶ τὰ πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἰσαγομμένα: Lib. cont. Appion I. Sect. 12.

b *Josephus* objects against their evidence as being interested and prejudiced parties: φαίνονται μὲν δὴ καὶ καλίστα πρὸς ἡμᾶς δυσμενῶς διαλέγοντες κοινῇ μὲν ἅπαντες Αἰγυπτῖοι, Φοινικῶν δὲ Τυριοί. Sect. 13.

partial

partial and imperfect; and all along less pure, as they passed through so many hands. And lastly it is observable that they betray an entire ignorance of the subject on which they write; they knew nothing of the constitution and customs of the *Israelites*; and they scarce ever mention them without making some notorious mistake; so that upon the whole they must be esteemed very incompetent judges of the original and antiquity of their religious rites, and their assertions on this head deserve no credit.

* The primitive Christians, who were better acquainted with their writings than we at present are, treated them in a proper manner: they were far from paying any deference to

a *Justin Martyr*, who was himself a *Platonick* philosopher, in his parænesis or exhortation with the *Grecians* speaks thus, πανταχοθεν ουν γνωμας ῥαδιον ὅτι πολλὰ ἀρχαιοτάτην πασάν των ἐξῆθεν ἱστοριῶν τῶν Μωσέως ἱστορίαν εἶναι συμφαινει· ἀλλῶς τε οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀπορία ὑμᾶς προσηκει ὅτι οὐδὲν Ἑλλῆσι προ των Ὀλυμπιαδων ἀκριβῶς ἱστορηται· οὐδ' ἐστὶ τι συγγραμμα παλαιον Ἑλλήνων ἢ Βαρβάρων σημανον πράξιν· μὴν δὲ ἡ του προφητου Μωσέως προπηρχεν ἱστορία, ἣν ἐκ θεας ἐπιπνοίας ὁ Μωυσης γεγραφε τοις των Εἰραίων γραμμασι. τα γὰρ των Ἑλλήνων οὐδέπω ἦν, ὡς δηλοῦσι καὶ αὐτοὶ των γραμμάτων διδασκαλοὶ, φασκόντες Καδμῶν πρῶτον ἐκ Φοινίκης αὐτὰ κομισαίῃα Ἑλλῆσι μεταδουνα. And again, ὅτι δὲ παλαιος καὶ πρῶτος ὁ Μωυσεὺς νομὸς καὶ ἐκ της του Διοδώρου καὶ των λοιπων ἱστοριῶν ἰκανῶς ἡμιν ἐν τοις προαγουσιν ἀποδείκνυται· πρῶτον γὰρ ἀπαντων νομοθετῶν αὐτον Διοδώρῳ γεγενησθ λέγει μηδέπω μηδὲ των τοις Ἑλλῆσι διαφερόντων ευρεθέντων γραμμάτων οἷς χρωμένοι αὐτων γεγραφατιν ἱστορίας.

their authority; but, while they confuted their errors, they at the same time expressed their ignorance, and pointed out the true *original*, from which they borrowed those notions, which gave the greatest value to their works. They upbraided their most celebrated authors, as smattering retailers of the true oriental wisdom; and as *Plagiaries*, who endeavoured by additional errors to disguise what they would not seem to borrow; having in their performances nothing more properly their *own*, than the disgrace of industriously corrupting truth, of polluting the purity of those streams, whose fountains they wanted either ingenuity to acknowledge, or ability to discover^a.

α Ου γὰρ λανθάνειν ενιου; ὅμων οἱμα εντυχοντας παντως που τη τε Διοδωρου ιστορια και των λοιπων των παρει τουτων φιλοσοφησαντων, οτι και Ορφευς, και Ομηρος, και ὁ Σολων ὁ τους νομους τοις Αθηναιοις γεγραφας, καὶ Πυθαγορας, και Πλάτων, και αλλοι τινες εν τη Αιγυπτῳ γενομενοι, και, εκ της Μωσειως ιστοριας ωφεληθεντες, ὑπερον εναντια των προτερον των μη καλως παρει Θεων δοξαντων αυτοις αποφηναντο. Thus *Justin Martyr* who in his *parænesis* often appeals to *Diodorus* as speaking in praise of *Moses*, and in particular as the first author of written laws.

Clem. Alexand. Strom. 1. speaking of *Plato* stiles him, τον εξ Εσραίων φιλοσοφον· and again, Strom. 5. speaks of the Greek philosophers — παρὰ Μωσειως και των Προφητων τα κρυπτατα των δογματων ουκ ευχαριτως ειληφοτες.

The

Abraham's Religion represented. 53

The whole tenour of ^a *Josephus's* treatise against *Apion* is to the same purpose, and, from the evidence of heathen writers he enforces conviction. — And indeed we cannot account for this proceeding of the *Greeks* but upon the following supposition. The *Egyptians* were a people, who above all others valued themselves upon the *antiquity* of their kingdom, and the invention of arts and sciences. Now the *Greeks* frankly owned that they received from *them* the most considerable part of their knowledge, both political and religious. To *them* therefore they attributed the discovery of all truths, which they could trace down from no higher original. In the mean while they had no immediate access to the *sacred* oracles, to the *Mosaick* history: they knew nothing of the *Hebrew* antiquities, as *such*, but as involved in the *Egyptians*, under which appellation the *Hebrews* were often comprehended: and therefore, when-

α Τα μὲν οὖν παρ' Ἑλλήνων ἀπάντα νῦν, καὶ χθὲς καὶ πρῶτον, ὡς αὐ-
τίς ἐῖποι, εὐρητῆις γέγονοτα· λέγω δὲ τὰς κτίσεις τῶν πόλεων, καὶ τὰ
πᾶσι τὰς ἐπινοίας τῶν τεχνῶν, καὶ τὰς τῶν νόμων ἀναγραφάς· πάντων δὲ
νέωτάτη χρεὸν εἶναι ἢ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἢ περὶ τοῦ συγγράφειν τὰς ἱστορίας ἐπι-
μελεία. And agan, Ὅψι δὲ καὶ μόλις ἐγνώσαν φύσιν τῶν γραμμάτων
παρὰ Φοινίκων καὶ Κεδμῶν· ὅλως δὲ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήτιν οὐδὲν ὁμολογεῖ-
μενον γράμμα του Ὀμήρου ποιητικῶς πρεσβύτερον. Sect. 2.

Thus *Josephus*, in these and other like passages, disproving their claim to antiquity.

ever

ever they met with any religious rite or notion received in other countries, which was analogous to what they had before observed in the ordinary course of their enquiries, they, not knowing how to account for it in any other way, without scruple derived it from what appeared to them most ancient, from *Egyptian* extraction.

As I have so often cited *Josephus*, it will not be improper to represent in his own words the reason and design of his writing this treatise; in which he will appear to have answered the reader's expectation. He has asserted the superior *antiquity*, and in consequence of that the authority of the *Mosaick* history: in comparison of *this* he shews that all other histories were *recent*; he withal shews their inconsistency and falsity: and particularly with regard to the *Greeks*, who set themselves up for writers of universal knowledge, he convicts them of vanity, ignorance, and impudence: as being the most incompetent judges of the matters which they so rashly assert. I shall here recite some of his arguments in proof of this point. He had proved their want of authenticity, as being *recent*, and too remote from the times of which they treat.

--- Επει δὲ συγχρῆς ὁρῶ τοῖς ἱστοριογράφοις ἱστορίας τι-

νων ειρημiais προσεχοντας βλασφημiais, και τοis ωει
 τιν αρχαιολογiam υπ' εμου γεγραμμενοις απιστηας,
 τεκμηριον τε ποιειμενους τα νεωτερον ειναι το γενος ημων,
 δια το μηδεμιας ωρτα τοis επιφανεσι των Ελληνικων
 ιστοριογραφων μνημης ηζιωσθαι, περι τετων απαντων
 ωτην δειν γραφαι σωτομωs, των μη λοιδορεντων τιν
 δυσμενειαν, και τιν εκβοιον ελεγχαι ψευδολογiam; των
 δε τιν αγνοiam επανορθωσασθαι· διδασχαι δε παντας οσοι
 τ' αληθες ειδεναι βελον·) περι της ημετερας αρχαιοτητος.
 Sect. 1.

He there thus accounts for their ignorance
 and misrepresentations: Sect. 12. 1. 1. αιπον δε
 γνωσκειν τ' αληθες το λιαν ανεπιμικτον· τα δε γραφειν
 ψευδη --- το βελεσθαι δοκειν το πλεον των αλλων ιστο-
 ρειν. πως εν επι θαυμαζειν προσηκειν ει μηδε το ημετε-
 ρον εθνος πολλοις εγιγνωσκειο, μηδε της εν τοis συγγραμ-
 μασι μνημης αφορμην παρεχεν, ετω μεν απωκισμενον
 της θαλαττης, ετω δε βιοσκειν προσημενον.

The want of publick records the cause of
 ignorance and inconsistency of their writers:
 ατε δη τοινυν εδεμιας προκαταβεβλημενης αναγραφης,
 η και τας μαθειν βελομενους διδασχειν εμελλε, και τας
 ψευδομενους ελεγχειν, η πολλη προς αλληλως εγενετο
 διαφωνια τοis συγγραφεσι. δευτεραν δε προς ταυτα γε-
 τεον εκεινω τιν αιτιαν· viz. their arrogance and
 vanity as writers; οι γαρ επι το γραφειν ορμησαν-
 τες ε περι τιν αληθειαν εσπασταν, και τοι τωο προ-
 χειρον εσιν αι το επαγγελμα; λογων δε δυναμιν.
 επιδεικνυτο

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επιδεικνυῖτο· καὶ καθ' ὅλην τρόπον ἐν τῷ παρειδοκι-
μῇσιν τὰς ἄλλας υπελαμβανόν, κατὰ τῶν ἡρμοζόντων·
τινὲς μὲν ἐπὶ τὸ μυθολογεῖν τρεπομένοι, τινὲς δὲ πρὸς χά-
ριν ἢ τὰς Πολεῖς ἢ τὰς βασιλεῖας ἐπαυνέτης· ἄλλοι δὲ ἐπὶ
τὸ κατηγορεῖν τῶν πράξεων ἢ τῶν γεγραφόρων ἐχωρήσαν, ἐν
εὐδοκιμῇσιν τῷ νομιζόντες· ὅπως δὲ πάντων ἐναντιώσασθαι
τῇ ἰστορίᾳ πρᾶττοντες διαέλυσσι· τῆς μὲν γὰρ ἀληθείας ἐστὶ
τεκμηρίον ἰστορίας εἰ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀπάντες τ' αὐτὰ
γράφουσιν καὶ λεγοῖεν· οἱ δὲ εἰ τ' αὐτὰ γράψουσιν ἑτέρως,
ὅπως ἐνομίζον αὐτοὶ φανέσθαι πάντων ἀληθεύοντες.
Sect. 5.

Hence such contradictory accounts of the
same things: Πλεον γὰρ διὰ τῶν βιβλίων ἀλλήλων
ἐλεγχῶσι, καὶ τὰ ἐναντιώσασθαι περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λεγέειν
ἐκ οὐκ ἐνός· περιεργὸς δ' ἂν εἴην ἐγὼ τὰς ἐμὰς μάλλον ἐπι-
σταμένως διδάσκειν, ὅσα μὲν Ἑλλανικῶς Ἀκχιλαῶ
περὶ τῶν γενεαλογικῶν διαπεφωτῆκεν; ὅσα δὲ διορθῆσαι
τὸν Ἡσιόδον Ἀκχιλαῶς, ἢ τινὰ τρόπον Ἐφορος μὴ
Ἑλλανικόν ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις ψεύδοντον ἐπιδεικνύουσιν,
Ἐφορον δὲ Τιμαῖος καὶ Τιμαῖον οἱ μετ' ἐκείνον γεγονότες·
Ἡρόδοτον δὲ πάντες. Sect. 3.

He then proceeds to point out some of the
causes of this disagreement: Αἰτιαὶ δὲ τοιαύτης
διαφωνίας πολλαὶ μὴ ἰσως καὶ ἑτέραι τοῖς βεβλημένοις
ζῆλιν ἀναφανέειν· ἐγὼ δὲ δυσὶ ταῖς λεχθησομέναις τῇ
μεγίστῃ ἰσχυρῶς ἀντιθῆμι· καὶ πρότερον ἐρῶ τῇ κυριώ-
τατῇ εἶναι μοι δοκῶσαν· τὸ γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὴ ἀπαδα-
ρῆναι παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι δημοσίας γενέσθαι περὶ τῶν
ἐκαστοῦ

εκάστῃ πραττομένων αναγραφας, τὸ μαλιστα δὴ καὶ
τὴν πλανὴν καὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν τὴν ψευδεσθαι τοῖς μὲν
πάντα βεληθεῖσι περὶ τῶν παλαιῶν τι γραφεῖν παρ-
οχεν. Sect. 4.

Well then may we join with him in this
inference or expostulation with the *Greeks* :
Πως ἔν ἐν ἀλογον τετυφωθαι τὰς Ἑλλήνας, ὡς μόνες
ἐπισαμένες τὰ ἀρχαῖα, καὶ τὴν ἀληθειαν περὶ αὐτῶν
ἀκριβῶς παραδιδόντας ; ἢ τις ἔ παρ' αὐτῶν συγγραφεῶν
μαθοῖ ραδίως, ὅτι μηδὲν βεβαιον εἰδότες συνεγραφον,
ἀλλ' ὡς ἑκάστοι περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων εἰκαζοῖντο. Joseph.
cont. Ap. l. i. Sect. 3.

I have been led into this digression concern-
ing the *Greeks* in order to shew their *igno-
rance* and *vanity*, and how little stress is to be
laid upon the authority of *their* assertions, es-
pecially in opposition to *sacred* history. And
I am further led to animadvert upon the pro-
ceeding of certain learned men among Chris-
tians, who in their manners resemble the
Greeks whom they so much admire, being
prejudiced followers of *them*, as they were of
the *Egyptians*. They apply themselves early
to the study of *Grecian* antiquities, rather than
those in sacred history ; and the effect of this
is, that they set out prepossessed with false per-
suasions, which they have taken some pains to
acquire ; and perhaps are carried away by this
fallacy,

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fallacy, that what happened to be prior in their order of *learning*, really claimed precedence in point of *antiquity*. *Prophanarum antiquitatum præjudiciis occupatum ad sacra animum appellentes minus aliquando perite de eis censuerunt, & quod prius didicerunt id etiam antiquitus esse temere opinati sunt.* Wits. *Ægypt.* And accordingly in some controverted points, such as the original of circumcision and the like, they derogate from the authority of sacred history, by endeavouring to accommodate it to the prophane, in whose favour through familiar use they have been long prejudiced.

I have therefore, from the history of *Abraham* in particular, endeavoured to trace out the successive propagation of religious principles by patriarchal tradition: and to shew that, thro' *him* and the other patriarchs, opportunities were offered to a considerable part of mankind of being instructed in many religious doctrines and duties; the effects of which are discernible in certain national antiquities.

I beg leave in the last place to recapitulate, and to bring into one point of view, the several historical facts recorded by *Moses*; viz. that he was in a special manner called out by
God

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God — that he was zealous for the honour of God, and good of mankind — that he accordingly was disposed to use all means afforded him in order to obtain those ends — that he acted under *supernatural* direction, and was protected by God's more immediate providence — that he was favoured with many extraordinary revelations of the divine will; and accordingly was well *qualified* to become an instructor — that he was one mighty in his generation, distinguished by wealth, reputation, and authority, circumstances, which must recommend and give *efficacy* to his instructions — that withal he had *opportunities* of propagating his religion, having travelled through a good part of the then known and inhabited world, honoured and revered by all nations, among whom he sojourned. So that, not only his private *family*, which was very numerous and powerful, and in a few ages became great and mighty nations, carrying in their bodies the distinguishing badge of his religion and seal of his Covenant: but many *other* kingdoms also had the benefit of his precepts and example — and that from this fountain, either mediately or immediately, were derived many religious doctrines, duties, and ceremonies. And this is here mentioned with a particular
view

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view to the *Egyptians*; a people celebrated for their wisdom, who prescribed laws and religion to many other countries: so that, as hath been remarked, to teach *them* knowlege, was virtually to become a teacher to a good part of *mankind*; and especially that inquisitive arrogant people, who boasted of their superior learning, despising all the world besides; and yet acknowledged that they borrowed from the *Egyptians* the greatest part of their knowlege, political, philosophical, and religious.

From these facts and circumstances we infer the *extensive* propagation of *Abraham's* religion, or a mediate revelation, successively communicated by patriarchal tradition: *Abraham*, a person taught of *God*, a *Prophet*, a *Friend of God*, and *Father of the Faithful* — and the succeeding patriarchs, men famous in their generation for wisdom and piety, became teachers to a good part of mankind. From them distant, as well as neighbouring, nations, by immediate or mediate intercourse, derived the knowlege of those truths, which were most admired in their several systems of religion, as most worthy of *God* to reveal, and suitable to the nature of man to receive. So that from this view of things it might be shewn, that what some arrogant moralists would

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would recommend under the notion of religion purely *natural*, if it was traced up to the fountain head, would in fact be found to be for the most part *traditional*: originally derived from the author of nature, who at sundry times, in divers manners and degrees, made such revelation of his will to mankind.

What is here said is by no means intended to depreciate the excellency of *natural* religion: we rather wish that the principles of that system were drawn out in their whole extent and stood in their full force: for from them might be demonstrated not only the *possibility*, but also the *probability*, not only the *usefulness*, but also the *necessity* of divine revelation for the direction of mankind. Consider the nature of *man*, not in an imaginary state of perfection, but, as he really is, a degenerate corrupt creature, darkened in his understanding, and perverse in his will; by an inbred propensity more inclined to evil than good; on the whole so circumstanced, as to stand in need of some extrinsical aid for his instruction and support: consider now the divine attributes: what might reasonably be expected from God's wisdom and goodness; the obvious presumption is this, that, as he is able, so also he is willing to relieve the necessities

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cessities of his creatures in all respects, and accordingly in the present instance to supply them with competent means of knowing that which is made the rule of their conduct, and since their natural faculties are indisposed or incapable of this attainment, to afford them the assistance of some supernatural light proportioned to their several exigencies: thus from principles of natural religion we infer the expediency of revelation.

Consider now the history of *facts*, and the gracious dispensations of God's providence in the several ages of the world; from the creation you will all along find the traces of his occasional interposition: there was no period of time, in which mankind were entirely destitute of some revelation of the divine will, either immediately or mediately communicated. The extraordinary longevity of the patriarchs, which gave them an intercourse with their distant posterity, was an instrumental means of preserving the religious notices they had received: and thus we conceive there always subsisted some scheme of patriarchal tradition; and from thence we may most probably trace out the derivation of several rites and notions generally received in the world.

Yet

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Yet nevertheless, though it be certain that God hath in divers times and manners revealed his will to mankind, men are rather willing to compliment their own sagacity with the discovery of all moral and religious truths: these upon examination are found agreeable to reason, and therefore they are apt to look upon them as Principles rather *naturally* known than received by information: so insensible are they of the divine goodness, and so industrious to deceive themselves.

With regard to *natural* religion — this, as contradistinguished from *revealed*, implies a system or collection of certain doctrines and duties discernable by the ordinary use of mens natural faculties: from hence it follows that no system of natural religion can be more perfect than the *reason* which makes such discoveries. They therefore, who magnify the perfection of *natural* religion, do in reality magnify the sufficiency and perfection of their own *reason*, and are carried away by this pleasing delusion into a disregard of revelation. Be it allowed that the invisible things of the Creator may in some measure be known from the visible Creation — that the essential differences between good and evil, that the lines of duty are in most cases discernible by an in-

quisitive

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quisitive attentive eye ; yet it must also be allowed, that human reason, as subsisting in the bulk of mankind, however attended with all natural advantages, if left entirely to it's own workings, and destitute of all supernatural assistance, would at best make but a slow progress in religious knowlege, and in the generality of mankind would be lost in uncertainty, error, or ignorance. And indeed the history of the world from the fall of man to the present times carries down with it upbraiding proofs of the *insufficiency* of human reason for this purpose, and the *necessity* of supernatural direction. And in fact God, who ordains nothing in vain, hath made in sundry periods of time sundry revelations of his will. He raised up extraordinary teachers, and examples of righteousness, in the midst of a perverse generation ; to whom men did well to take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place. Among these by way of eminence was the patriarch *Abraham*, in a truly moral sense the *father of the faithful*, a promoter of God's true religion. In this view I have considered the most remarkable circumstances in his history, and endeavoured to trace out the extensive influence and effects of that patriarchal zeal, thus approved and rewarded by God :
from

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from whence we may account upon probable grounds for the derivation of several religious notions and rites which some admirers of prophane antiquity vainly refer to another original. — I shall not enlarge further upon this subject, but conclude with recommending the example of the Patriarch to your imitation; that in your several stations, according to your abilities and opportunities, as fathers, governors and masters of families, you would like him be zealous to promote God's true Religion, and Virtue; that, like him, you would readily follow the guidance of heavenly light, in whatsoever manner or degree dispensed: it was the singular Praise of his Faith, that he, being called out *obeyed, not knowing whither he went*: it is the peculiar happiness of the Christian world that God hath vouchsafed to deliver such an explicit revelation of his will, such a perfect rule of faith and manners, that he, who runneth, may read, and he, who readeth, may understand all things necessary to salvation. *Blessed are we Christians, to whom God hath revealed those good things, which many wise men and patriarchs have desired to see, and hear, and have not seen nor heard them.* Let us then learn to set a just value

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on the benefit which we enjoy ; and without reluctance submit our imperfect knowlege to that wisdom which cometh from above : let us not *deceive ourselves through vain philosophy*, seeking for truth where it cannot be found ; but in all enquiries let *the lively oracles of God* be our guide, which alone can make us *truly wise, wise unto salvation thro' Faith which is in Jesus Christ* : let us not, who are fed with *the bread which came down from Heaven*, like the perverse *Israelites* in the wilderness long after *the flesh pots of Egypt* : let us not give credit to the legendary tales of prophane history in opposition to the authentick records of holy writ : what else is this, but to forsake the *fountain of living waters*, and to hew to ourselves *Cisterns, broken Cisterns which hold no water ?* *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding* : this was the lesson of true wisdom inculcated by the wisest among the sons of men, in this was contained the chief merit of the Patriarch's *Faith which was imputed to him for righteousness* : Let us take his example for our rule, and his reward for our encouragement ; like him, let us count ourselves *pilgrims*

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grims and strangers on the earth, seeking a better country, and go through this probationary state in the exercise of the like patriarchal virtues, faith in God's promises, and obedience to his commands: so shall we approve ourselves true children of the faithful Abraham, and inherit a portion of his reward.

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giving and suffering on the earth, seeking a
better country, and go through this proba-
tionary state in the exercise of the like pa-
triarcal virtues, faith in God's promises,
and obedience to his commands: to all
we approve ourselves the children of the
faithful Abraham, 56 AP 4